

tortured thousands more in expiation of their real or imputed heresy. The *regime* of those savage fanatics—brutes and blockheads in one—who knew neither mercy nor fairplay, was one of the fellest tyrannies ever hatched by the worst of all inhumanities—that which clothes itself in the garb of religion—and the association of the new Spanish monarchy with this monstrous tyranny for political as well as religious ends is an Indelible stain on the reigns of Isabella and Ferdinand and their immediate successors. In the face of these facts we have only too good reason for the conclusion that anarchy was, after all, not so terrible a scourge for Aragon and Castile as this fell priestly fanaticism in alliance with monarchic autocracy. Materially as well as politically, the Inquisition was the curse of Spain.

It is difficult, in view of these things, to warm into admiration at the mention of the name of Isabella, though her contemporary, Guicciardini, extols her love of justice, her generosity, her frankness. For the false and grasping Ferdinand one can only feel unmitigated dislike. The forceful and effective government of the couple certainly contrasts favourably with the miserable *regime* of many of their predecessors, and its efficacy, from the political point of view, is proved by their foundation of the greatness of Spain as an European power. But the spirit of their government repels us. A king that is prone to falsity and rises no higher than the accomplished schemer; a queen that is strong-minded and active, and yet is governed by an obscurantist priest of the truculent type of a Torquemada, are not attractive personages. They might be great politicians ; neither was a great ruler in the best sense. They might raise Spain to a prominent height as a great power ; its worst enemy could not have done it more mischief in some vital respects.

Isabella had, indeed, many good traits as a woman and a ruler, and it must be remembered, in palliation of her bad traits, that she was wedded to a husband who was one of the historic trio of masters of political craft, unscrupulousness, and falsity, of which Alexander VI. and Louis XL were worthy members. Her piety, her humility, and her love of justice are indubitable. Nevertheless, her approval of the savagery of a Torquemada has sullied her memory, even if we make